

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 22, 2014

Agenda Item: Bighorn Sheep Transplant Endorsement

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement to Proceed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background

Trap and transplant of bighorn sheep is an effective management tool. The removal of sheep assists population control. Transplanted animals can ultimately represent new populations or augment existing ones. Funds from auction licenses are available for transplants with all animals receiving a health assessment at capture. The potential new releases below are presented for endorsement by the F&W Commission. Any final Commission endorsement for the new transplant would come after additional formal public review to include an Environmental Assessment. Augmentations of existing populations and sheep captures from source populations may take place with F&W Commission endorsement. These types of management actions and associated process are consistent with the Montana Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy.

Bighorn Sheep

Transplant sheep in the Bear/Indian Creek areas of the Madison Basin. This new release was initially planned for early 2014 with the EA and final Commission approval is already in place. The release did not happen due to disease concerns but will be pursued again this coming fall or winter. The primary first source population would be the Madison herd.

Proposed additional review of the Livingston Peak area in the Paradise Valley. Before any transplant could occur, a formal EA would be conducted with final approval by the F&W Commission at a later date.

Bighorn sheep from HD 482 (Missouri Breaks south of Missouri River) have been identified as a source population needing population management (reduction).

Public Involvement Process & Results

Continued formal public review process is required for any new release in the Livingston Peak area. Any final Commission endorsement would come in late summer or fall after this formal public review process.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

At this time, FWP recommends confirmation of the new release in Bear/Indian Creek areas and a source capture in HD 482. Any new release in the Trapper Peak area will be predicated by additional public process and additional Commission review before any transplant may proceed. These efforts represent reasonable management tools in combination with hunter harvest and are consistent with the Montana Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy.

Proposed Motion

I move the FWP Commission confirm again the new transplant in the Madison, endorse HD 482 as a source population and endorse continued review for a potential new release in the Trapper Peak area as presented by FWP.